



[Send News](#)



[Blogs](#)



[Photos](#)



[Subscribe](#)



[Calendar](#)



[Homes](#)



[Job](#)

[News Search](#) [Web Search](#) [Classified Search](#) [Advertising](#) [Home Delivery](#) [Reader Services](#) [Traffic](#) [Stocks](#)

[Home](#) [News](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Opinion](#) [Entertainment](#) [Features](#) [Columnists](#) [Con](#)

[Top Stories](#) • [Coastal](#) • [Inland](#) • [Californian](#) • [San Diego](#) • [State](#) • [National](#) • [Military](#) • [Politics](#) • [Back Page](#) • [Speci](#)

Archives

Last modified Wednesday, March 29, 2006 5:22 PM PST



[Email this story](#)



[Print this story](#)



[TEXT SIZE](#)



[Comment in our Blog](#)

House panel approves bill to speed logging in burned forests

By: MATTHEW DALY - Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- A key House committee approved legislation Wednesday to speed up logging dead timber and planting new trees after storms and wildfires.

With the size and severity of wildfires increasing in recent years, the bipartisan bill demands that areas hit by disasters greater than 1,000 acres be restored quickly.

Currently, environmental analyses can take a year or more, followed by lengthy appeals or court battles. During that time, the commercial value of fire-killed timber steadily diminishes as insects and rot set in.

The bill, sponsored by Reps. Greg Walden, R-Ore., and Brian Baird, D-Wash., would give public land agencies 30 days after a catastrophe to come up with a plan, with a 90-day public comment period after that. Court action would be allowed thereafter.

Environmentalists are fighting the measure, arguing that cutting large old trees and planting new ones results in forests that are more vulnerable to new fires and less valuable as habitat for fish and wildlife. They say it is better to allow forests to come back on their own.

The House Resources Committee approved the bill 25-13, with six Democrats joining 19 Republicans in favor. All 13 no votes were by Democrats.

Walden, chairman of the panel's forestry subcommittee, called the bill a common-sense approach to management of federal forest lands. The bill, known as the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act, "will help America's forests and watersheds recover faster and better after a catastrophic event," he said.

Hot Topics

Readers reflect on the latest trends

Demonstrators have every reason to speak out

Our political leaders, like much of the public in North County, do not understand the social earthquake occurring right under our feet. This is the most significant event since the civil rights movement in the '60s. In both cases, the fearful whites reacted with anger and hatred. Our Latino population is responsible, civil, hardworking and law-abiding. I have been to numerous public demonstrations, but never have I heard of 700,000 people coming together without one single incident of violence or arrests. The police were as well-behaved as the marchers. [23](#)

[Comment\(s\)](#)

Visit our news blogs at blog.nctimes.com.

"People use wood -- to build homes, to make paper -- and that wood needs to come from somewhere," Baird added in a statement. "We can use wood from trees that are dead or dying, or from trees that are alive and healthy. Furthermore, we can responsibly harvest wood here at home ... or we can get our wood from clear cuts in equatorial rain forests where the environment is far more fragile and environmental laws are far weaker or even nonexistent."

After the Forest Service took two years to start selling timber killed by the 500,000-acre Biscuit fire in southern Oregon, lawmakers in the Pacific Northwest began efforts to speed up the process and increase scientific research into regenerating forests after wildfires.

Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., introduced a similar bill in the Senate.

The measures have generated national controversy, after some Oregon State University faculty who favor salvage logging tried to delay publication of a study that questioned the value of salvage logging.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management briefly withheld university funding while the Bush administration sorted out whether the study by graduate student Daniel Donato violated a prohibition against lobbying Congress. The funding was restored after criticism by Democratic lawmakers.

Rep. Jay Inslee, D-Wash., said the Walden-Baird bill "represents a continuation of the Bush administration's efforts both to ignore sound science and to reduce citizen input in decisions about their beloved forests."

The bill "isn't about replanting," Inslee said. "This is about helping special interests log in areas that were never meant to be logged, and that's our roadless areas."

The measure now goes to the House Agriculture Committee.

On the Net:

Information on the bill, H.R. 4200, is at <http://thomas.loc.gov>



Comments On This Story [Add A Comment](#)

Note: Comments reflect the views of readers and not necessarily those of the North County Times or its staff.

Add Your Comments or Letter to the Editor

First name only. Comments including last names, contact addresses, email addresses or phone numbers will be deleted. All comments are screened before they appear online. Please keep comments brief. [Click here](#) to view additional comment policies.